

custom will be evident if we compare the marriage ages and birth-rates of different sections of the population. In the classes who live by mining and textile work, where the birth-rate is comparatively high, women are married on an average 3 years earlier than in the professional classes amongst which the birth-rate is at its lowest. If we compare the parishes of Bethnal Green and St. George in the East with those of Maffair and Belgravia, we find that the percentages of married women who are under 25 years of age are respectively 20 and 7; and we may reasonably believe that the higher birth-rate of the poorer parishes (37 per mille against 16) results in a measure from the larger proportion of young wives. The fall in the general birth-rate which has occurred since 1871 is, no doubt, too considerable to be accounted for altogether by the avoidance or postponement of marriage. The deliberate prevention of child-bearing has been a contributing cause. But it seems probable that if more women married and at an earlier age, the birth-rate would recover much of its former amplitude.

Generally, marriage is postponed for prudential motives, and where children are profitable to their parents, as for instance in the colliery districts of South Wales, young people marry early and have large families. The attitude of religion towards marriage has also been of im-

portance. In religions which make a strong appeal to the aesthetic feelings, the reproductive impulses of mankind are boldly accepted as a gift from Providence : but those which express man's ethical aspirations avert their attention from these instincts as in some way shameful. We find accordingly that in the religions of Asia, in the Jewish faith, and in Roman Catholic